Holme Low Parish Council

Safeguarding Policy – Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults

1. Introduction

1.1. Holme Low Parish Council (the Council) recognises its duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. This policy outlines the Council's commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals from abuse and harm, in accordance with relevant legislation and best practices.

1.2. Everyone, including children, young people, and vulnerable adults, has the right not to be abused. We recognise the need to ensure their welfare when they come into contact with the services we provide.

1.3. This policy should be read in conjunction with Holme Low Parish Council's Complaints Procedure, Equality & Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy, and Risk Management Policy to ensure a comprehensive approach to safeguarding.

2. Policy Statement

2.1. Holme Low Parish Council is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable persons are protected from harm while engaging in Council activities or services. The Council will take the following precautions to safeguard their welfare:

- Ensuring all councillors, staff, and volunteers understand and comply with this safeguarding policy.
- Conducting **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks** where necessary.
- Providing safeguarding training to individuals in relevant roles.
- Ensuring clear reporting procedures for safeguarding concerns.
- Maintaining a safe environment in all Council-run activities and premises.
- Working in partnership with local safeguarding boards and authorities.
- Regularly reviewing and updating this policy to remain compliant with legal and best practice requirements.

3. Legislative Framework

This policy is guided by the following key pieces of legislation relevant to parish councils:

- **Children Act 1989 & 2004** – Establishes the duty to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

  Care Act 2014 – Provides a framework for safeguarding adults at risk.

- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006** – Establishes the legal basis for barring unsuitable individuals from working with vulnerable groups.
- **Equality Act 2010** – Ensures protection from discrimination.
- **Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR** – Governs the handling of personal information.

4. Scope

4.1. This policy is the responsibility of all councillors and staff connected to Holme Low Parish Council.

4.2. Children and young people are defined as those aged under 18.

4.3. A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over:

- Who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability
- Who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

For example, a person who:

- is frail due to age
- has drug or alcohol problems
- has a learning disability
- has mental or physical ill health or disability.

4.4. Vulnerability is related to how able an adult is to make and exercise their own informed choice, free from duress or undue influence, and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. There is no hard and fast rule: an adult should be assumed to be covered by this policy unless there is information to indicate that they are not.

5. Types of abuse

5.1. **Physical**: causing physical harm, including hitting, shaking, biting, grabbing, withholding food or drink, force-feeding, wrongly administering medicine, unnecessary restraint, failing to provide physical care and aids to living.

5.2. **Sexual**: including sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching/molesting, forcing, or enticing someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse; grooming a child or young person in preparation for abuse.

5.3. **Emotional or psychological:** persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection, including verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, threatening abandonment or harm, isolating, taking away privacy or other rights, bullying/intimidation, blaming, belittling, silencing, controlling, or humiliating.

5.4. **Financial or material**: illegal or improper use of an adult's property, money, or other assets without their informed consent or where the consent is obtained by fraud. It can include withholding money or possessions, theft of money or property, fraud, intentionally mismanaging finances, borrowing money and not repaying.

5.5. **Neglect**: persistent or severe failure to meet a person's basic physical and psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of their health or development, and can include withholding shelter, food, drink, heating and clothing, failing to provide access to health, social and educational services, ignoring physical care needs, exposing a person to unacceptable risk, failing to ensure adequate supervision or unresponsiveness to the basic emotional needs of a child.

5.6. **Discriminatory abuse:** including slurs, harassment and maltreatment due to a protected characteristic (Equality Act 2010).

5.7. **Institutional abuse**: including the use of systems and routines which neglect a person receiving formal care e.g., in a children's home.

6. Signs of abuse

6.1. There are many possible signs of abuse, none being conclusive on their own. Examples include:

- Unexplained injury / weight loss / cuts and bruises / dirtiness
- Changes in behaviour
- Depression / low self-esteem
- Lack of self-care / dehydration / abnormal eating pattern
- Harm to self
- Obsessive behaviour
- Bills not being paid
- An overly critical or disrespectful carer who may bully or undermine
- Isolation from usual network of friends, family, or community

7. Safeguarding

7.1. Safeguarding children from abuse and promoting their welfare means:

- protecting children from maltreatment.
- preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

7.2 Safeguarding vulnerable adults means protecting them from maltreatment and preventing injury or significant harm. Abuse violates an adult's human and civil rights. It can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

7.3 A safeguarding concern arises if abuse is suspected or disclosed. Abuse can happen anywhere – at home, in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, at a day centre or educational establishment or in the street.

8. Reporting safeguarding concerns

8.1. We all have a responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns over the welfare of children, young people, or vulnerable adults. This extends to the identification of signs of abuse; poor practice by staff, councillors and others acting for or on behalf of the council, and allegations brought to our attention by a member of the public. Reporting safeguarding concerns can prevent serious abuse or harm from happening, or from escalating.

8.2. Staff and councillors must not attempt to investigate abuse themselves; neither must they confront anyone who is allegedly responsible for abuse nor tell them that allegations have been made about them.

8.3. The **Designated Safeguarding Lead** is Wendy Jameson, Parish Clerk. They are delegated to receive concerns about safeguarding and to respond swiftly and appropriately as required. **Email:** parishclerk@holmelow-pc.org.uk. **Tel:** 0777 5686857.

8.4. If the Parish Clerk is absent, do not wait for him/her to return to work.

8.5. Dial 999 if a child, young person, or vulnerable adult may be in imminent danger or a criminal offence may have been committed.

8.6 Report safeguarding allegations or concerns to **Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP)** or **Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board (CSAB)** at the earliest possible opportunity, and at least within 24 hours.

8.7. Cumberland Council or the Police should be given as much factual information as possible. For example:

- The child, young person or vulnerable adult's name and address (and parents'/carers' address if different).
- The reason for concern – notes of significant events or conversations should be made as promptly as possible to assist with any referral and subsequent investigation.
- Any other known factors which may be contributing to the problem.
- Additional information such as age (or date of birth), ethnicity, religion, language, and disabilities / specific needs.
- However, the safeguarding concern should still be reported whether or not the information is complete.

9. Confidentiality, record keeping and sharing information

9.1. Information about safeguarding concerns should be regarded as confidential. The information is not secret, however, and Holme Low Parish Council will co-operate with investigations by Cumberland Councils Children's or Adults services, or the Police applicable, and follow their advice to ensure that any risk to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults is addressed.

9.2. Where a disclosure is made it is important that the staff member does not promise the child/young person/vulnerable adult to keep the information secret but says that they will only disclose it to someone who can help them.

10. Allegations against a councillor or member of staff

10.1. If someone witnesses behaviour by a councillor, member of staff, contractor or partner, or an allegation is made about them that indicates that they have, or may have:

- harmed a child, young person, or vulnerable adult, or put them at risk of harm.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, young person, or vulnerable adult or
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, young people, or vulnerable adults,

they must report it as a safeguarding concern to the Police and/or Cumberland Council's Children's or Adults Services at the earliest possible opportunity.

10.2. A councillor or member of staff must report any allegation made against them to the Parish Clerk or Chair of the Council.

10.3. Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to staff will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure (including in instances where the member of staff resigns or leaves). However, investigations by the responsible authorities will take precedence over internal council procedures relating to conduct. The Parish Clerk or Chair of the Council will liaise with the responsible authorities to agree the appropriate course of action.

10.4. The Parish Clerk or Chair of the Council will seek advice from the Cumberland Council's Children's or Adults Services or Police prior to informing a member of staff of an allegation against them. The Clerk

or Chair of the Council will offer appropriate welfare support to the member of staff and ensure that they are kept appropriately informed during any investigation process.

10.5. In accordance with the law, the council will refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) any member of staff

- who was dismissed because they harmed a child or adult.
- who was dismissed or removed from working in a regulated activity because they might have harmed a child or adult otherwise.
- who would have been dismissed for either of these reasons, but they resigned first; or
- who works with children or vulnerable adults in regulated activity and has been cautioned or convicted for a relevant offence.

10.6. Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to councillors will be referred to the Monitoring Officer and dealt with in accordance with the Code of Conduct of Members of the Council.

11. Recruitment and Selection

11.1. Criminal record checks will be made where appropriate. Roles that involve "regulated activities," such as caring for, supervising or being in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults, require an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check. This may include checking whether someone is included in the two DBS 'barred lists' of individuals who are unsuitable for working with children and adults. DBS Checks must be obtained for staff and volunteers undertaking these roles, and they will not be permitted to commence unaccompanied work until they have been received. It is against the law for employers to employ someone, or allow them to volunteer for, this kind of work if they know they are on one of the barred lists.

12. Information and Training

12.1 Appropriate information will be made available to staff and councillors in the form of this policy and any necessary training.

13. External organisations licensed by, or working with, for or on behalf of the council.

13.1. The council works with and through a number of external organisations such as charities, contractors, other public sector bodies etc.

13.2. Where these external organisations are likely to have significant contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults as a direct result of their work for, on behalf of, or in partnership with the council, they are required to have safeguarding procedures, such as safe recruitment and selection processes, in place. They must be made aware of this policy and must provide the council with a copy of their safeguarding procedure.

14. Review

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or sooner in response to legislative changes or significant safeguarding concerns.

Approved by Holme Low Parish Council on: 8 April 2025

Contacts for Reporting Concerns:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):**
  Wendy Jameson, Parish Clerk: parishclerk@holmelow-pc.org.uk
- **Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP):**
  www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk Telephone: 0333 240 1727
- **Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board (CSAB):**
  www.cumbriasab.org.uk Telephone: 0300 373 3732
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):**
  lado@cumberland.gov.uk Telephone: 0300 303 3892
- **NSPCC Helpline:** 0808 800 5000
- **Police (Emergency):** 999
- **Police (Non-Emergency):** 101